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NEWS RELEASE

UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON HIRES FATHER CHRIS WITTMANN, S.M., TO LEAD UD'S CAMPUS MINISTRY, ONE OF LARGEST IN COUNTRY

DAYTON, Ohio — When the Rev. Chris Wittmann, S.M., attended the University of Dayton, he organized a charity dance marathon to benefit muscular dystrophy, volunteered to till the land in Edgemont Garden and played games with mentally ill patients at a nearby hospital — all as a member of Circle K, a campus ministry service club.

In July, he comes full circle when he returns to his alma mater as director of campus ministry. It's the exact title he currently holds at Chaminade-Julienne High School.

Wittmann, 41, replaces the Rev. James Fitz, S.M., who will become assistant provincial for the Society of Mary Province of the United States in St. Louis this summer.

UD boasts one of the largest campus ministry staffs on any campus in the country. Its 27 campus ministers and support staff provide pastoral services, organize retreats, promote peace and justice activities, work with the student development staff to encourage spiritual growth in the residence halls, apartments and houses, oversee a certificate program in lay ministry and coordinate the activities of nearly 30 service clubs. About 1,000 students yearly perform service activities ranging from tutoring inmates to building affordable housing or spending spring break working in inner cities. The weekend retreats fill up so quickly that some even offer waiting lists.

In February, Wittmann, who lives with other Marianist brothers and priests in UD's student neighborhood, accompanied a group of students on a guided retreat to Indian Lake. Occasionally he offers Mass in the Immaculate Conception Chapel on campus.

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"I'm excited by the opportunity to serve University students in a vital Marianist ministry," he said. "There's already a very vibrant campus ministry program at UD, and it's a leader among campus ministry programs in the country. I'm impressed by the staff and their ministry."

For the past 10 years, Wittmann has directed the Marianist LIFE Retreat Program, a summer program for 70 high school students from the U.S., Canada and Puerto Rico. For the past five years, he's also directed the campus ministry office at Chaminade-Julienne, a Marianist high school, where he coordinates retreats, liturgies, a peer ministry program, prayer services and pastoral counseling for the school's 970 students. He taught religion classes for nine years, first at Hackett Catholic Central High School in Kalamazoo, Mich., then Chaminade-Julienne, where he served simultaneously as a campus minister.

"Chris is known as a good listener with strong pastoral skills. He's very team-oriented, and his passion is ministry," said the Rev. Eugene Contadino, S.M., University of Dayton rector who chaired the search committee. "He will be very strong in this role."

Wittmann earned a master of divinity degree from St. Michael's Faculty of Theology in Toronto in 1993. He also holds two degrees from UD: a master of arts in theological studies in 1987 and a bachelor of arts in psychology in 1983.

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For interviews, contact **Father Chris Wittmann, S.M.**, at (937) 461-3740, ext. 244.